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APPENDIX III International Boundaries on the Pamirs

IN THE decades of Anglo-Russian rivalry described in Chapter II, the eventual junction of the expanding frontiers of the British and Russian Empires was an open question. In 1895, however, as part of the easing of relations between Britain and Russia, a Pamir Boundary Commission was empowered to lay down a jointly recognized frontier. 131

This Commission consisted of a Russian Mission under General Shveikovskii, which surveyed the approaches from the northern side, and a British Mission under General Gerard, which surveyed the approaches from the southern side. The two Missions met at Lake Victoria "and from that point to the eastward demarcated the line which was thereafter to divide Russian from British interests in highest Asia." This phrasing is cited from the article "Pamirs" in the Eleventh Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1911), by Sir Thomas H. Holdich, who as Colonel Holdich had been an important member of the British Pamir Mission of 1895.

The principal sources for the description of the frontier thus established are:

1. *Report of the Proceedings of the Pamir Boundary Commission*, Calcutta, 1897, with chapters by Maj.-Gen. Gerard, Col. Holdich, Lt. Col. Wahab, and others. 131 112
2. *The Indian Borderland*, by T. H. Holdich, London, 1901.
3. Article "Pamirs," by T. H. H. (Sir Thomas H. Holdich),

[p. 259]

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131 in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Eleventh Ed., Cambridge-New York, 1911.

• 112 4. *Anglo-Russian Relations concerning Afghanistan*, 1837–1907, by William Habberton, Urbana, Illinois, 1937.

5. "The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus," by G. N. Curzon, *Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. VIII, London, 1896.

131 The Anglo-Russian survey resulted in an "Agreement between the Governments of Great Britain and Russia with regard to the spheres of influence of the two countries in the region of the Pamirs" (1895). The essential paragraphs, cited here from Habberton's book (Appendix III, pp. 91–92) are:

4. Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia engage to abstain from exercising any political influence or control, the former to the north, the latter to the south, of the above line of demarcation.
5. Her Britannic Majesty's Government engage that the territory lying within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line running from the East end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier shall form part of the territory of the Ameer of Afghanistan, that it shall not be annexed to Great Britain, and that no military posts or fortifications shall be established in it.

000 In *The Indian Borderland* Holdich unofficially but authoritatively describes the effect of this wording (p. 284):

> [It] defined a buffer between ourselves and Russia. It is not an imposing buffer — this long attenuated arm of Afghanistan reaching out to touch China with the tips of its fingers. It is only eight miles wide at one part, and could be ridden across in a morning's ride.

Neither Afghanistan nor China, though their interests were affected, took part in this important survey and frontier delimita-